

**REPORT FOR: CORPORATE
PARENTING PANEL**

Date: 8 July 2013

Subject: INFORMATION REPORT – Activity and Performance

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Catherine Doran, Corporate Director of Children and Families

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zarina Khalid
Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

Exempt: No

Enclosures: CLA & CPP Performance Report

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out latest performance position and analysis of latest available performance data relating to Children Looked After (CLA). Key information is produced quarterly and Quarter 4 data was provided at the Corporate Parenting Panel on 22nd April 2013. Quarter 1 2013-14 data is not yet available & will be presented at the next Panel.

Section 2 – Report Issues

See attachment which shows performance for 2012-13 and analysis of Harrow's performance in key areas compared with statistical neighbours

Key Points

The first phase of the Children's Services Improvement Plan was completed at the end of Q3. Harrow Children and Families Service and its partners are moving into a new phase of development to drive improved practice and outcomes. Efforts are focusing on enhancing outcomes for vulnerable children and families throughout their engagement with Council and other local services. To emphasise this, the improvement programme has been re launched as:

“The Child's journey: how much; how well; what difference”

This complements the new operating model in Children's Services and the drive for improved integration with partner organisations. It is also designed to prepare for the new Ofsted inspection regime, which involves detailed tracking of the experience and outcomes for families from preventative and early intervention services through to the most intense social care input and beyond.

The focus on improving the quality of social care has involved review of thresholds to ensure that vulnerability is being identified and appropriate intervention takes place. As a result more children and families are being assessed and more child protection investigations are being carried out. The 'front door' is identifying a greater level of need in the local community leading to greater levels of early intervention or targeted services.

From 2011-12 to 2012-13 there was an increase of 56% in number of core assessments carried out by social workers, a 51% increase in Section 47 investigations. The activity has been seen to increase further in the early months of 2013-14 – there were 23 and 17 new child protection plans put in place in April and May respectively compared with an average of 12 per month in 2012-13. There have also been 34 new children looked after in the first 2 months of the year compared with an average of 8 per month in 2012-13. Increases in legal proceedings suggest that this trend is likely to be sustained.

In the context of the work on the Child's Journey, the new Divisional Director for Targeted Services (DD TSD) is focusing on the following performance challenges:

Stability of social care workforce – there is a high number of agency workers currently in the service. Our recruitment and retention strategy was finalised during May. We have recruited an external HR specialist who is project managing this. Our recent recruitment campaign from Feb 2013 resulted in over 70 applications for social work posts and we have appointed

12 social workers, 4 senior practitioners and one service manager. We continue to offer placements for step up to social work students and are offering 6 for autumn 2013 with a view to those becoming members of staff in due course. We have also expressed interest in the new national graduate programme for social work – 'Frontline' - and are hoping to form a partnership approach to this with our West London Alliance colleagues. Our change proposals are being implemented to realign work flow to reduce numbers of social workers children experience and enable better quality more timely work to be done at the front line.

We are launching a further recruitment campaign shortly to address posts that were not filled: some senior practitioners and team manager posts, and to ensure ongoing recruitment of social workers. Currently all social workers and managers in the Children Looked After Service are permanent however due to the levels of increased activity, and number of open cases including child protection plans we are currently operating with 12 social workers above establishment.

Social Care Assessments - Our thresholds for Social Care Intervention were reviewed in early 2013-14 in order to ensure that all vulnerable children receive an appropriate intervention either through Targeted Services or Early intervention. Our Core Assessments activity has increased by 56% from previous years. This year 922 Core Assessments were completed compared to 601 last year. Oversight and timely completion of assessments has improved significantly for Q4 since the Service Manager Quality Assurance was seconded into this area. 78% of Initial & 81% of Core assessments were completed on time in March 2013. For 2013-14, a single assessment has been introduced in line with the Munro recommendations and the focus on quality of social work practice is being supported with simplified systems and processes. We have appointed a permanent service manager for our front line service who starts in August 2013.

Stability of placements for CLA – Both short & long term stability of placements needs further focused work to be in line with our statistical neighbours. We have scrutinised reasons for this through forensic examination of individual children. The Divisional Director Targeted Services Division (DD TSD) has set up an Access to Resources Panel which scrutinises all placement moves for authorisation before they are implemented. This Panel sits weekly and although it is too early to see impact yet we are confident that the required change in approach to placement moves and entry to care in a planned and purposeful way will improve as a result of the overview and scrutiny of cases at this Panel.

Outcomes for care leavers - Rates of care leavers in suitable accommodation and in education, training and employment are both below expected levels. A workshop has already been held with the team and managers to develop ownership and action planning and action planning to improve our outcomes for care leavers.. Further support of the work of getting care leavers into Education, Employment and Training is being supported by additional resource to track cases and support young people through the Virtual School.

Educational outcomes for CLA - Harrow School Improvement Partnership has been commissioned to support improvements in the CLA virtual school.

This project, involving a range of Council and school staff began during Q4 and is driving improvements in attendance, achievement and educational experience for CLA. DfE have changed the way this indicator is measured and now only looks at those CLA looked after for 1 year+ who are successfully matched to the National Pupil database. 7 CLA have had a fixed term exclusion compared to 9 last year and they are a priority for the virtual school. There have been no permanent exclusions. Two workshops so far have been held to promote and prioritise the work of the Virtual School and a robust action plan has been developed.

Highlights of the Performance Report

Timeliness of adoptions is 100% which is an excellent result. We currently have 9 children in adoptive placements who should be formally adopted in the next year. We are also likely to place more children for adoption this year and increase our numbers of children being placed permanently with family members under a Special Guardianship Order.

Our numbers of children looked after who are placed more than 20 miles away has significantly reduced on previous years which is also a very positive change. We are now performing well above our statistical neighbours on this indicator. Placing children closer to their home borough means it is easier to ensure robust care planning for their health and education arrangements, and being closer to home means they are likely to have better arrangements for contact with family.

The rate of repeat child protection plans is down on the previous year, focused work, early intervention & preventative work will reducing the need for repeat plans for all children in need. This combined with the data described above about our very large increase in activity levels and numbers of assessments completed demonstrates our commitment to lowering the threshold for social care intervention over the past year. In recent months our numbers of both children subject to child protection plans (139) and children looked after has gone up (185) and it is likely that we will continue to see sustained levels of higher assessments, child protection plans and children in care.

Options considered

Not applicable

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications

The Children's Services Risk Register has been updated to reflect the performance risks highlighted in this report.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? No

Corporate Priorities

§ Supporting and protecting people who are most in need

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Patricia Harvey

on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 25/06/2013

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Background Papers:

Children Looked After Performance & Activity Report

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